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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

THE MISSION OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AND ITS SUPPORT TO THE UNITED STATES ARMY COMPARED TO THE MARINE AIR GROUND TASK FORCE (MAGTF) CONCEPT

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Executive Summary

Title: The mission of the United States Air Force and its support to the United States Army compared to the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) concept.

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Thesis: When Executive Order 9877 was signed in 1947, it granted the United States Air Force its autonomy from the U.S. Army and delineated its new roles and responsibilities. One responsibility, support to ground forces, has remained a point of contention between the Army and the Air Force. Should the Air Force adopt more of a combined arms approach in the employment of combat forces, it would become part of a much more formidable combat force. This force would be similar to what is known as a Marine Air Ground Task Force or MAGTF.

Discussion: By reviewing history and numerous events that took place in America's wars starting from World War II and on, it is evident that the Air Force's move away from what should be its primary mission started long before and has continued long after Executive Order 9877 was signed in 1947. While the Army Air Force struggled for autonomy during World War II, the argument between the effectiveness of strategic and tactical aviation ensued. Those that desired autonomy believed that strategic bombing was the best course of action for aviation because it was believed that these forces could destroy the enemy before they ever reached friendly forces.

Following the development of nuclear weapons, the leaders of the Air Force saw no need for a significant amount of tactical aviation in support of ground forces because all future wars could be prevented, or won, through the use of nuclear weapons. This mindset gave little thought to the role of close air support (CAS) to ground forces, and theories that all battles could be fought with a strong air force and nothing else developed. History proved such a theory wrong with examples from Korea and Vietnam where large ground forces from both the Army and Marine Corps were required.

During both Korea and Vietnam, the Air Force was never really prepared to provide an effective close air support platform designed to deliver ordnance against enemy concentrations in close proximity to friendly troops. The Air Force never developed a timely and effective system to process tactical airstrike requests for CAS platforms submitted by the Army during those two wars. Vietnam showed that a heavy concentration of air power in the role of interdiction cannot secure land and will not always stop enemy movement and that a coordinated plan with a ground forces is required.

Conclusion: By adopting the idea of a ground/air team, similar to what the Marine Corps defines as a Marine Air Ground Task Force, or MAGTF, the Air Force could better meet its responsibilities as the CAS platform of the Army, as well as develop a more timely an effective system to provide such support. If the Air Force put more importance toward its support to ground forces, like the Marine Corps does with its aviation assets, they would become a much more formidable force combined with the Army. The Air Force's focus on air superiority, aerial interdiction, and then support to ground forces, should change to air superiority, support to ground forces, then lastly, aerial interdiction.

I agree with Bobby Kennedy. We should stop bombing North Vietnam."

- MSgt, Rodney Baker, U.S. Army

As MSgt. Rodney Baker spoke those words while in a rice patty in Vietnam, he summed up the Army's view of close air support. When asked why, he replied, "Because I don't want to waste any of it. I want it all, I want it now, and I want it in that tree line right over there."[1]

On 26 July 1947 President Harry S. Truman, the thirty-third President of the United States, signed Executive Order 9877- Functions of the Armed Services which prescribed the primary functions and responsibilities to the three armed services. Through the order, the Army Air Force gained its independence from the Army and became a stand-alone service, the United States Air Force. This event amplified further the Air Force's desire to branch away from its original link to the Army and its responsibility to provide air support to ground forces, both in the strategic and tactical realms. Through its continuous pursuit for independence, and its desire to branch away from the Army and the task of supporting a ground force, the Air Force prevented itself from developing into a much greater combat power like that of an Air/Ground team. Should the Air Force adopt more of a combined arms approach in the employment of combat forces, it would become part of a much more formidable combat force. This force would be similar to what is known as a Marine Air Ground Task Force or MAGTF.

By reviewing history and numerous events that took place in World War II, it is evident that the Air Force's move away from what should be its primary mission started long before and has continued long after Executive Order 9877. After World War I, discussions about the use of air power and its importance in future wars arose in the U.S. military with staunch advocates such as William "Billy" Mitchell and Carl "Tooey" Spaatz who rose to positions of prominence in the debate. These two officers saw the importance of air power and the effects that it could

have in future wars; however, their views of how air power should be implemented differed. Mitchell believed that aviation should be split up into two categories, tactical and strategic. Tactical aviation would be attached to divisions and corps in order to support ground operations, whereas, strategic aviation would be used to strike against infrastructure, materials and reinforcements far from friendly lines. Spaatz advocated preeminence to strategic aviation and argued that air power alone would be capable of winning wars.[2]

In doing so, Spaatz adhered to the teachings of Giulio Douhet, an Italian theorist of air power whose ideas were included in the Army Air Corps Tactical School curriculum, and increased the desire for an autonomous force amongst Army aviators. The Mitchell-Spaatz dialogue, in turn, led to discussions throughout the army on future air power and army aviation, which continued long after the Air Force became an independent service. These discussions and disagreements even existed at the Tactical School amongst the staff and instructors.[3]

During the early stages of the school curriculum, little was known about the application of air power in war, so most of the courseware dealt with how air power could be used to support a ground campaign.[4] However, as time and technology progressed, the development of the bomber increased the emphasis on strategic employment of air power. With that, a noticeable decrease on the focus of air support for ground forces developed. The Air Corps sought to support the ground forces through, first and foremost, gaining and maintaining air superiority over the enemy, then focusing on striking at the enemy's lines of communications. The school also developed the mindset that air power should always be centralized in whatever mission it was conducting, whether strategic or tactical.[5] These mindsets would later become points of contention with the Army, and even the Marine Corps during future wars.

As the Army Air Corps developed, animosities grew at both the strategic and tactical levels. There was still a struggle to keep the Air Corps under control of the Army for aviation support. The Artillery Branch of the U.S. Army desired to have assets at their disposal for reconnaissance missions to locate enemy positions, call in artillery strikes, and to act as spotters for any adjustments for accuracy. The Air Corps however, desired to keep a centralized control over all aviation assets with a unified command under Air Corps control. This conflict continued even throughout WWII. Artillery units continuously pressed for air assets under their control for spotting. From this dispute emerged the birth of Army Aviation as it is seen today.[6]

As the struggle for autonomy continued during the war, the argument between the effectiveness of strategic and tactical aviation ensued. Those that desired autonomy believed that strategic bombing was the best course of action and could destroy the enemy before the ground forces ever met up with it. At this time though, much to the chagrin of the strategic, autonomous thinkers, the functions of tactical air power were defined by the Chief of Staff in September 1940.[7] The memorandum read:

> (1) close, direct air support fire missions on the immediate front of ground forces; (2) air defense of friendly ground forces and installations in the combat zones; (3) air attack against targets in hostile rear areas; (4) support of airborne forces; (5) reconnaissance, observation, liaison.[8]

As the war continued, so did the Army Air Corps' desire for autonomy. After combat experiences in North Africa, the Field Manual 100-20, *Command and Employment of Air Power* was written. This manual listed in order of priority the missions of tactical aviation. It delineated three specific missions and their priorities: air superiority, isolation of the battlefield, and combined actions with ground forces. It was clear that the mindset of the Air Corps gave little importance to close air support, even before it became a separate service. The manual

included nothing about the importance of coordinating with the ground units or their scheme of maneuver, or requiring any communication or cooperation with them. This factor led to numerous incidents between air and ground forces throughout different theaters during the war.[9]

One tragic example of this issue occurred on the night of 11 July 1943 during Operation HUSKY, the amphibious assault into Sicily. Although the Army Air Force destroyed many airfields and ports, which kept the Axis ability to conduct air raids to a minimum, the Axis powers still managed to impact amphibious shipping with their bombers and attack aircraft. During the first two days of the amphibious assault, the Allied naval vessels suffered numerous air raids from Axis aircraft.[10]

After the beach head had been secured by the amphibious force, the Tactical Air Command, without proper coordination, launched 144 transport planes into the amphibious objective area (AOA) to drop paratroops on an emergency airstrip. The transport planes arrived right in the middle of an air raid by Axis air assets so recognition was impossible during the night. Twenty-three out of the 144 air transport planes were shot down, and almost half of the planes that did return were badly damaged. A total of 60 pilots and aircrew were lost, along with 40 paratroop passengers who were shot down or drowned.[11] Coordination issues continued between the ground forces and Air Force throughout the rest of the war.

It is evident that coordination and cooperation with ground units is imperative during large scale conflict, and that all forces must be controlled by one commander in the overall campaign. This will not only prevent fratricide, but also permit unity of effort and a focus for all forces involved. Defining the supporting and supported unit relationship is a requirement for effective operations. In the 1947 Executive Order, the following missions were delineated to the Air Force:

1. To organize, train and equip air forces for:
    a. Air operations including joint operations.
    b. Gaining and maintaining general air supremacy.
    c. Establishing local air superiority where and as required.
    d. The strategic air force of the United States and strategic air reconnaissance.
    e. Air lift and support for airborne operations.
    f. Air support to land forces and naval forces, including occupation forces.
    g. Air transport for the armed forces, except as provided by the Navy.

2. To develop weapons, tactics, technique, organization and equipment of Air Force combat and service elements, coordinating with the Army and Navy on all aspects of joint concern, including those which pertain to amphibious and airborne operations.

3. To provide, as directed by proper authority, such missions and detachments for service in foreign countries as may be required to support the national policies and interests of the United States.

4. To provide the means for coordination of air defense among all services.

5. To assist the Army and Navy in accomplishment of their missions, including the provision of common services and supplies as determined by proper authority.[12]

Following the development of nuclear weapons, the leaders of the Air Force saw no need for a significant amount of tactical aviation in support of ground forces because all future wars could be prevented, or won, through the use of nuclear weapons. This mindset gave little thought to the role of close air support of ground forces and theories that all battles could be fought with a strong air force and nothing else.[13] History proved such a theory wrong with examples from Korea and Vietnam where large ground forces from both the Army and Marine Corps were required.

During the Korean War, the mission of close air support caused much controversy between the services in both the war on the peninsula as well as in Washington. At the beginning of the war, the Air Force was ill prepared to provide the Army with capable close air support platforms. After the post-World War II era and tight budget constraints, the Air Force focused greatly on its strategic mission at the expense of its tactical aviation, which included

platforms and training in close air support. It was forced to use aircraft that were not originally designed for that mission set and proved to be less capable than Marine and Navy assets that were later brought in as more forces were deployed in support of the war. The 5th Air Force in Japan designed its force to defend Japan with short-range fighters that were not well suited to conduct CAS, nor were their light-bombers which were primarily designed as Air Interdiction platforms. Their aircraft were launched from Japan and would normally arrive with only fifteen minutes of time on station to support the Army ground units.[14]

The Air Force CAS request system was long, timely, centralized, and unresponsive to ground units.[15] It was comprised of a combat operations section and an Army air-ground operations section. The Air Force provided liaison officers down to each regiment to process close air support requests. Overall, the Army was displeased with the Army-Air Force CAS system and believed it was heavily flawed. The Army desired a much more responsive system, such as the Marine Corps's.[16] Captain Keith Kopets explained it thoroughly in his paper *The Close Air Support Controversy in Korea,* when the Marines entered the Korean War, their air ground coordination was based on two principles:

1. Close Air Support is an additional weapon for the ground commander to use at his discretion. ...The ground commander may employ close air support in either of two ways: against targets his other weapons cannot reach or in conjunction with the ground weapons in a coordinated attack.

2. Timing is of the utmost importance. Ground commanders should have air support readily available. When they call for air support, they should receive it deliberately, accurately, and in coordination with the other assigned units.[17]

As all the services continued to disagree on this topic, other disagreements continued between the Army and Air Force on the subject of air assets, specifically ones used by the Army as observer and artillery spotter aircraft. The Army was able to keep these types of airframes due

to the original presidential order stating the Army "shall include such aviation assets as are deemed organic."[18] Executive Order 9877, which defined the roles and responsibilities of the armed services, went through several changes and versions in following years. The first two revisions were the Key West Agreement of 1948, and the Army and Air Force Authorization Act of 1949. Neither had any bearing on the relationship between the Army and Air Force. The primary focus of these two documents was on refining the Army's mission.[19]

The next documents were the Pan-Finletter Agreements of 2 October and 4 November 1952, which specifically dealt with the Army having spotter and observation aircraft. Originally, Army aircraft were imposed with weight restrictions. This concept proved to be too restrictive as technology advanced and more advanced systems were put on aircraft. This move resulted in these agreements, which defined Army organic aircraft in terms of functions vice weight. One particular aircraft was the focus of much debate, and that was the helicopter. This order restricted the Army from using its organic assets outside of a combat zone. The order further defined a combat zone to be fifty to seventy miles in depth forward of the front line.[20]

Even after the last agreement between the services, disputes about Army organic aviation and the amount of support they were given by the Air Force continued. The Secretary of Defense passed a memorandum, subject: "Clarification of Roles and Missions to Improve Effectiveness of Operation of the Department of Defense." This memorandum assigned the Army's organic aviation four specific missions: command/Liaison, observation, limited airlift, and medical evacuation. The memorandum also restricted Army Aviation from performing four functions assigned to the Air Force: strategic and tactical lift, tactical reconnaissance, battlefield air interdiction, and the most important, close air support.[21] Another change to this order was the Department of Defense Directive (DOD) 5160 of March 1957. The main impact that this order

had was expanding the defined combat zone from fifty to seventy miles out to 100 miles[22]. Close air support was one responsibility of the Air Force that never changed throughout all the new memorandums and agreements.

The use of helicopters and disputes over doctrine led to the issue of whether or not the Army, having organic assault helicopters, infringed on the Air Force's formally established roles and responsibilities. During the early stages of American involvement in Vietnam, the Army sought to exploit the mobility of the helicopter. It also desired to protect these assets as well as units being inserted, with armed helicopters due to the lack of fire support assets available in the austere environment they were deployed. The Army also desired to arm their fixed-wing observation platforms as well. The Air Force, however, saw this as an infringement on their mission to provide air support, specifically close air support, as well as their doctrine of having centralized control of all air assets.[23]

As the Vietnam War increased in hostility and intensity, so did the Army's use of the helicopter and the interservice rivalry it had with the Air Force. The Air Force did accept the Army's right to have assault helicopters, its use of armed helicopters as escorts, and, on a limited basis, those helicopters being employed in a close air support role. The Air Force did this with the stipulation that the Army's armed helicopters would only be used as escorts, and would provide CAS to the recently inserted forces. They would not to be scheduled or used as a routine CAS platform throughout the theater. Contrary to the Air Force's view, Army units as well as FACs, desired to use armed helicopters for normal CAS operations. Although armed helicopters did not have the fire power of the Air Force fighter-bombers, ground units and FACs desired the helicopters low-yield weapons because they would bring their fires closer to friendly units. The Air Force continued to complain about Army helicopters expanding their operations from

helicopter escort with embedded CAS, to operating in an a purely offensive role and expanding their operations into interdiction and CAS missions. These actions resulted in Army units requesting support from armed helicopters instead of utilizing the Air Force's TAC system to request Air Force fighter-bomber CAS support because of the decreased response time by Army helicopters.[24]

As the role of Army organic aviation grew in Vietnam, especially with respect to the helicopter, the disputes between the Army and Air Force resulted in the Johnson-McConnell Agreement of 1966. This agreement specifically addressed the issue about the Army using the helicopter extensively throughout the war for troop transport and fire support which went against DOD Directive 5160. This agreement stated that the Air Force Chief of Staff would relinquish "all claims for helicopters and follow-on rotary wing aircraft which are designed and operated for intratheater movement, fire support, supply and resupply of Army Forces."[25]

This agreement did not completely put an end to the anomaly of the helicopter. After being prompted by the Armed Service Committee about the role of helicopters in the close air support mission and the possible duplication of responsibilities; the Chiefs of Staff of both the Army and Air Force wrote a letter to the Chairman of the Committee which explained that Army attack helicopters do not conduct close air support. They explained that the attack helicopter is an extension of the Army's organic firepower and also an integral part of the ground maneuver unit. They stated that "it is to be employed with, or to the rear of, ground forces along the forward edge of the battle area (FEBA) to provide helicopter escort and suppressive fire, to counter enemy armor at the FEBA."[26] Their letter further stated that, "the Army and Air Force agree that the attack helicopter does not perform CAS but is intended to complement Air Force CAS capabilities."[27]

The issue about the limits of air power and effectiveness of aerial interdiction arose during Vietnam with respect to the Air Forces attempt to stop the flow of supplies from North Vietnam with air power alone. This flow of supplies traveled through Laos and Cambodia along what became known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Although there were political issues that also prevented the use of a ground force in the interdiction inside these two countries, it is a good example of an attempt to hold or deny ground from the enemy with air assets only. During the early stages of Vietnam in 1966, the trail was 820 miles of fair weathered roads, but by 1971, American Intelligence found that it had grown to 2,710 miles of roads. In order to counter this vast resupply route, the United States launched numerous aerial interdiction operations into Laos. One of the largest and most technically oriented of these operations was named "Commando Hunt." It lasted from 1968 through 1972.[28]

During the different phases of Operation Commando Hunt, the Air Force employed a myriad of different aircraft outfitted with the newest reconnaissance technology available, in an effort to combat the extensive jungle and overhead cover that the triple canopy jungle provided the North Vietnamese. Throughout the seven different phases of the operation, the Air Force flew thousands of sorties against the trail. During Commando Hunt VII alone, nearly 9,000 sorties would be flown in bombings against targets along the trail. Nearly half of those sorties were used against anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) and surface to air missile (SAM) threats that had been placed along the trail.[29]

The effectiveness, or lack thereof, of the aerial interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh Trail is evidenced by the North Vietnam Army's (NVA) Easter offensive in the spring of 1972. During the offensive, the NVA laid siege to An Loc, the provincial capital of Bin Long Province, with three divisions along with their supporting units, an estimated total of over 35,000 troops, along

with numerous tanks and armored vehicles.[30] Countless sorties, munitions, aircraft and aircrew were used in the interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh trail with no truly effective outcome. Only by employing a sizable ground force, augmented by air power to confront the resupply effort at select choke points in the country of Laos, would it be possible to have an effective interdiction of NVA forces and materials flowing south. An integrated air/ground team was the answer.

Adding to the issues between the services during Vietnam was the lack of a clear command and control structure at the theater level causing further problems in how the control of air assets, specifically tactical aviation, and to a certain extent, strategic aviation, would be handled. There was an attempt to make the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) a unified commander, but it was defeated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff due mostly to specific service desires mistrust of sister services and budget concerns. In the end, MACV was relegated to a unified nature of command where no service would be completely under the command of another.[31]

The rivalries and conflicts in doctrine also effected forces at the operational level of war when it came to the control of air assets in Vietnam. The Air Force once again wanted complete control of all air assets from the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps under its Tactical Air Control system. The Army and Marines desired to maintain control over their assets in order to ensure the responsiveness in Close Air Support that they could provide. One large point of contention between the two services was the employment of assault helicopters, and more so was the use of rotary wing attack helicopters in an offensive role. The Air Force initially saw this as an infringement on its mission, but eventually conceded that the Army could have its own rotary wing fire support, and that a combination of rotary wing from the Army and fixed wing support from the Air Force was optimal.[32]

The United States armed forces are not the only ones that have faced problems between the services with respect to air power and how it should be used. Israel has faced this issue between the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and the Israeli Air Force (IAF) through multiple conflicts that it has been involved in. During the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, the IAF proved highly successful against the Egyptian Air Force when Israel launched a preemptive strike against Egyptian airfields. The IAF planned and executed a superb surprise attack that completely destroyed the Egyptian Air Force. This enormous aerial success caused Israel to plan an entire defensive strategy around its Air Force's capabilities with little regard to its ground forces. This move proved disastrous in their next war against Arab invaders. [33]

During the 1973 Yom Kippur War in which Israel fought Syrian and Egyptian forces, Israel's defense strategy employed a great emphasis on the reliability of the IAF and the fact that it would always be the decisive dimension in their defense plan.[34] When initial hostilities began with Arab forces attacking in two regions simultaneously, the Egyptian and Syrian forces, augmented by their advanced anti-air weaponry, effectively crippled the IAF's ability to conduct attacks against their ground forces, and thus negating Israel's most effective tactic of close air support followed by a crushing ground force attack. It was at this point that the venerable IAF's ability to play a decisive role in the defense of Israel was in question. Israel experienced a tough lesson learned during this war in that air power alone cannot be depended upon in all situations, as well as the fact that aviation alone cannot hold territory. [35] Only through the use of superior and flexible tactics, coupled with the exercise of maneuver warfare and employment of effective combined arms, was Israel able to defeat an enemy that outnumbered it nearly nine to one.

These examples serve as indicators that such a singular focused view can not only be detrimental to success, but also be the key element in failure. As technology continues to

advance, and better, more capable weapons systems are developed for the battlefield, we must once again not falter by thinking that technology can solve all of our problems in warfare. This is especially true in our current fight in irregular warfare against non-state actors. Since Operation Iraqi Freedom-1, we have seen a tough and determined enemy continuously adapt to our tactics and technology through cheap and low-tech means. Terrorists in Iraq effectively neutralized to a certain degree, the American might in air power that was so brilliantly demonstrated during the Gulf War.

In the Gulf War, the military campaign design was broken down into four phases: "Phase I-Strategic Air Campaign, Phase II-Air Supremacy in Kuwait, Phase III- Battlefield Preparation, Phase IV-Offensive Ground."[36] Air power was planned as a key element during all four phases and specific targets sets were identified in order to achieve each phase. Through these phases, specific objectives would be met.[37]

1) Gain and maintain air supremacy to permit unhindered air and ground operations.
2) Isolate and incapacitate the Iraqi regime.
3) Destroy Iraq's known NBC warfare capability
4) Eliminate Iraq's offensive military capability by destroying key military production, infrastructure, and power capabilities
5) Render the Iraqi army and its mechanized equipment in Kuwait ineffective, causing its collapse[38]

At the conclusion of the Gulf War, the dispute raged on what actually won the war, air power, or ground forces. Air power unarguably played a significant and decisive role in the coalition's campaign against Iraqi forces. It destroyed the command and control and communications structure, strategic air defenses, naval ports, and many other military support facilities as well as large portions of the Iraqi army itself.[39] By achieving these objectives, air power shaped the battlefield to where the coalition ground forces had a significant advantage

over the Iraqi Army. But with all its success, there were some things that air power couldn't achieve. One specific objective not achieved was the destruction of the Republican Guard. Because of this fact, during post war analysis, the Army reviewed its doctrine and how it also needed to take steps to have a rapidly deployable ground force to take advantage of gains made through airpower.[40] T. R. Fehrenbach, a contributor to the Army's doctrinal publications stated in *This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness*:

> You may fly over a land forever; you may bomb it, atomize it, pulverize it, and wipe it clean of life – but if you desire to defend it, protect it, and keep it for civilization, you must do this on the ground, the way the Roman legions did, by putting your young men into the mud.[41]

The Gulf War was highly successful for two main reasons. There was a clear national strategy for the war with a desired endstate, and there was a unity of command where objectives were identified, and a comprehensible campaign plan was developed that enabled the ground and air forces to complement each other to produce a desired endstate. Air Power alone did not achieve it, nor did ground power alone, but both together. In the two previous wars that the United States had fought, this concept never reached the level it did during the Gulf War.[42]

When Operation Iraqi Freedom first began in March 2003, the Air Force again proved valuable in striking targets it could locate and concentrating on the Iraq Army's command, control, and communications in order to eliminate their ability to coordinate large attack forces against coalition ground forces. After coalition air assets had knocked out the Iraqi Command and control infrastructure, it continued to seek out targets and prevent any significant size enemy force from being able to move without detection. Certain Army leaders complemented the Air Force for the amount of CAS that was made available to them during the initial stages of the war,

which had been uncharacteristic of the two service's history. There were still complaints however, about the responsiveness from some ground forces.[43]

Like the relationships and experience in the past, there were contentions about the command relationships and the level of support given to the Army by the Air Force. In a phone interview conducted with Major David Farliegh USMC, who was a Marine Liaison officer at the Combined Air Operations Center in Qatar, he observed that most of the Air Force leadership resisted their role as a supporting element. In his analysis, most of the Air Force leadership at the CAOC neither understood, nor embraced the supporting/supported role that is engrained in Marine Aviators whose primary purpose is to support ground units. The Air Force, as an independent service with strategic responsibilities, sees itself as the supported unit. This inevitably leads to friction when it is primarily a ground fight, as it is in Iraq. Another issue found in the CAOC was the terminology used when the Air Force was unable to support JTARs due to the limited assets and resources available in such a large theater of operations. Normally, when a JTAR cannot be supported, it is labeled as "unsupported," the Air Force however, briefed the JTAR as "in reserve." This could be argued as a somewhat irrelevant issue, but it does continue to indicate the resistance the Air Force has to assuming a supporting role in combat operations.[44]

There are those that once again think differently and believe that air power alone can do what the large amount of ground troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan are doing, and thus decrease the amount of casualties that coalition forces have suffered since the beginning of hostilities. In his article "America's Asymmetric Advantage," Maj Gen Dunlap states that air power has been overlooked in our current fights in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and that "Boots-on-the-ground zealots" (BOTGZ) insist that ground forces be used. He goes on to compare

Army and Marine leadership similar to generals of old who refused to change their style of warfare, even though new and advanced weaponry such as the machinegun were introduced to the battlefield and increase the amount of casualties substantially.[45]

He specifically described how air power was the primary factor in how successful operations were in Afghanistan when he wrote:

> This new, high-tech air power capability completely unhinged the resistance without significant commitment of American boots on the ground. Indeed, the very absence of American troops became a source of discouragement. As one Afghan told the New York Times, "We pray to Allah that we have American soldiers to kill," adding disconsolately, "These bombs from the sky we cannot fight." Another equally frustrated Taliban fighter was reported in the London Sunday Telegraph recently as fuming that "American forces refuse to fight us face to face," while gloomily noting that "[U.S.] air power causes us to take heavy casualties." In other words the Taliban and al-Qaida ...were broken by the hopelessness that American-style air power inflicted upon them.[46]

Gen Dunlap is not incorrect in the observation that America's air power played a large role in the initial defeat of the Taliban regime, nor is he wrong in his statement of how important America's air power is to our continued success on the battlefield. Where his argument is truly flawed is in his conclusion that we can conduct these operations from the air alone. Although we toppled the Taliban regime quickly, we have still not been able to secure the country wholly, and establish a self-sustaining functioning government, and provide security to the people of Afghanistan. Air power alone will not provide them with the security they require, nor will it be a deterrent to murder and intimidation campaigns that are prevalent in both theaters of operations. Other Air Force officers have thought that the mere presence of aircraft will promote security and stop violence. They even believed that they would be able to seal borders through aerial reconnaissance. This will be expounded upon later when the Iraq War is covered in more detail.

In his efforts to portray air power as the answer to all types of warfare, Gen Dunlap used the IDF as an example of how well they used air power against insurgents during the conflict of summer 2006 against the Hezbollah. Gen Dunlap wrote "The summer was also marked by Israel's extensive reliance on air power against Hezbollah in Lebanon."[47]

In reference to Gen Dunlap's theories on air power, an interview was conducted with LtCol Avi Gil of the IDF who was involved not only in the summer 2006 Lebanon conflict with Hezbollah but also the winter 2009 Gaza conflict with Hamas. Gil stated that IDF forces were commanded by North Command during the July 2006 Conflict, and in many cases, North Command had no idea what the IAF was doing as it conducted operations in Lebanon. The IAF was being employed by the IAF Chief of Staff, but he did not answer nor did he coordinate with the IDF. Gil stated that for what the IAF did, it did well, but it was never integrated into the IDF's scheme of maneuver and never really supported it.[48]

During the 2006 Conflict, the IAF successfully hit 85% of the long-range rockets employed by the Hezbollah when the rocket teams operated forward of what could be called the Fire Support Coordination Line (FSCL). The IAF also found and struck the Hezbollah HQ in Lebanon. During the whole conflict, 90% of the sorties flown by the IAF were forward of the FSCL, while only 10% of the sorties were flown in the Close Air Support role in support of the IDF. The IAF exercised centralized command and centralized control over its assets. When asked from a ground commander's view, if the IAF airstrikes had any appreciable affects against Hezbollah forces, Gil stated that IAF air strikes had little to no effect against Hezbollah bunkers and fortified positions. Therefore, the IDF was forced to clear those areas out with its forces. Gil stated that almost none of the areas that the IDF fought were hit by the IAF prior to their arrival. Because the IAF worked separately from the IDF during this conflict, the IDF never

planned on having any close air support during its operations and the two forces pretty much worked independently. It was Gil's opinion that had the IAF worked more with the IDF, and a supporting/supported relationship had been developed, they could have achieved a lot more during the conflict. Gil felt sure that a combined effort between the IDF and IAF would have resulted in gaining more ground, prosecuting more of the enemy, and the IDF would not have suffered as many casualties.[49]

Having learned valuable lessons from the 2006 Conflict, Israeli forces approach their next conflict against the Hamas in Gaza in February 2009 much differently than it had in 2006. This time, its South Command was the overall command and it acted as a unified command where the IAF and IDF as well as the Navy were all tasked by South Command and worked together for a combined operation, similar to a MAGTF. According to Gil, trust was something that was earned by the IAF in their performance during this conflict. Unlike the campaign of 2006, the IAF worked directly with the IDF and prosecuted targets in the close air support role with both fixed-wing and rotary-wing assets. The IAF was included in the scheme of maneuver because they could be planned for this time. Centralized command but decentralized control was used, which enabled brigade commanders to authorize airstrikes in their area of responsibility. Because of these measures that resulted in a unity of effort, Israel was able to execute a highly successful campaign against the Hamas.[50]

Another issue that has affected the U.S. Air Force and how it fulfills its mission is due to some of the fateful choices it has made during its evolution over the past 62 years. After becoming an independent service, it was thrust into many different conflicts that did not take place on the battlefield. It fought heavily for the concept of air power and how important it was to the future wars of America. The Air Force leadership during this time made some decisions

that brought about what were probably unintended results. In Carl H. Builder's book, *The Icarus Syndrome*, he explains that during the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Air Force made two significant choices:

1. They accepted guided missiles and space satellites as alternative means to some of the broad and important end of air power.
2. They revealed – through their decisions more than their words – that their true affection was not for the theory of air power, but for the airplane.[51]

By these choices, the Air Force continued to focus on airplanes, and not its primary mission of airpower. This caused the service to break up into factions as different parties became involved in missiles, space, and different types of aircraft. The Air Force then became a service in which members were devoted to different means more than unifying ends, and instead on concentrating on the means to an end for air power, the ends became the means with the focus on aircraft or specific systems. Builder describes the mission of the Air Force being 'air power,' and that this was the wax that held together Icarus's wings; without it, he fell, as so would the Air Force.[52] During two separate wars, the Air Force was not prepared to provide proper air assets for close air support. In both Korea and Vietnam, the Air Force was prepared to fight a strategic war with strategically designed aircraft and was forced to use aircraft for CAS and strike missions that weren't originally designed to do so. Had it kept their close air support mission responsibility in mind, the Air Force would have been better prepared to fight both of these wars at their onset.

As a separate service, the Air Force must commit many assets and concentration to the strategic level functions of which it is responsible. One could argue that with its list of responsibilities, it is difficult to develop a platform, or allocate enough assets, to truly provide the Army with the air support that it needs at the tactical level. This, along with a desire for long-range stealth bombers and a nuclear responsibility add to such an argument. The best

counterargument is Marine Air and its responsibilities of supporting the six functions of Marine Aviation. With far more limited assets, Marine Aviation always trains to and stands ready to conduct the following: assault support, anti-aircraft warfare, offensive air support, electronic warfare, control of aircraft and missiles, and aerial reconnaissance. Many of the Marine Corps' air assets are capable of performing many of these missions but are not dedicated to just one, they are dual capable and more. The fundamental difference between the mindset of Marine Aviation and its doctrine, and that of the Air Force and its mission priorities, is that Marine Air conducts these missions in order to conduct its primary mission of support to the ground combat element.

The Air Force has many responsibilities and must stay ahead in technology and weapons capability in order to achieve air superiority over any enemy that the U.S. might face. It must also continue to concentrate and fulfill its strategic defense responsibilities. In order for it to truly meet the requirements of its mission by the President of the United States, the Air Force must change its traditional mindset about air power and adapt what Marine Aviation has within the MAGTF concept. Only by understanding and adopting the Air and Ground Team concept, will it be a truly effective fighting force for the United States in today's Joint environment. A refocus of its priorities with regards to the missions of aerial interdiction and close air support are needed. The Marine Corps cannot achieve its present and future missions without its air assets and capabilities. Those air assets and capabilities exist for one thing, to support the Marines that are in harm's way and on the front lines in the fight against those that would do them, and their country harm.

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